



SOUTHEAST IDAHO

BANNOCK, BEAR LAKE, BINGHAM, CARIBOU, FRANKLIN, ONEIDA, & POWER COUNTIES

LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

In March 2001, the Pocatello Metropolitan Statistical Area's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped one-tenth of a percentage point to 4.1 percent. Although March was a cold and wet month, the number of individuals who were employed increased by 170 to 38,910 and the number of individuals who were unemployed decreased by 40 to 1,660. Seasonal related activities contributed to increased employment in March. Contractors were able to begin building houses, and special events throughout the month required increased employment in retail outlets and lodging facilities. The area unemployment rate was five-tenths of a percentage point lower than the state rate of 4.6 percent and two-tenths of a percentage point lower than the U.S. rate of 4.3 percent. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was a full percentage point lower than March 2000.

The job situation improved in March, despite a return to winter-like weather conditions. Southeast Idaho Table 1 shows Nonfarm Payroll Jobs, in the Pocatello Metropolitan Statistical Area, grew by 250 in March 2001 from February 2001. Most job growth occurred in *Construction* and *Services*, a normal growth pattern for this time of year. In the *Goods-Producing Industries*, *Construction* gained 40 jobs in March, mainly in *Special Trades Contractors*. *Manufacturing* remained the same as in February at 3,000 jobs. Most increases in March occurred in the *Service-Producing Industries*, which gained 210 jobs. Special events, such as the Simplot Games, Dodge National Circuit Finals Rodeo, and Western Regional Wrestling Tournament fueled job growth in *Services' Hotels & Other Lodging Places*.

From one year ago, *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* increased by 530. *Manufacturing*, *Services*, and *Retail Trade* led job growth. The opening of a new Ramada Inn in Chubbuck and the expansions at Walmart and Fred Meyer contributed to the

Southeast Idaho Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Pocatello City MSA (Bannock County)

	March 2001*	Feb 2001	March 2000	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	40,570	40,440	39,200	0.3	3.5
Unemployment	1,660	1,700	2,010	-2.4	-17.4
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.1	4.2	5.1		
Total Employment	38,910	38,740	37,190	0.4	4.6
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	41,100	40,870	39,770	0.6	3.3
Unemployment	1,870	2,030	2,250	-7.9	-16.9
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.5	5.0	5.7		
Total Employment	39,230	38,840	37,520	1.0	4.6
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**	33,620	33,370	33,090	0.7	1.6
Goods-Producing Industries	4,490	4,450	4,370	0.9	2.7
Mining & Construction	1,490	1,450	1,550	2.8	-3.9
Manufacturing	3,000	3,000	2,820	0.0	6.4
Service-Producing Industries	29,130	28,920	28,720	0.7	1.4
Transportation, Comm., & Utilities	1,800	1,780	1,850	1.1	-2.7
Wholesale Trade	1,400	1,380	1,470	1.4	-4.8
Retail Trade	7,030	7,010	6,900	0.3	1.9
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,460	1,450	1,450	0.7	0.7
Services	8,200	8,070	7,980	1.6	2.8
Government Administration	3,400	3,400	3,380	0.0	0.6
Government Education	5,840	5,830	5,690	0.2	2.6

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

550 additional jobs in *Services* and *Retail Trade*. The 180 new jobs in *Manufacturing* were widespread and occurred throughout the entire industry.

SPECIAL TOPIC:

Southeast Idaho Agriculture

The agricultural industry lives with risk. Southeast Idaho area farmers and ranchers continue to adapt to changes in the market, weather patterns, and other economic events.

Crops grown in Southeast Idaho consist mainly of potatoes, sugar beets, winter and spring wheat, alfalfa, barley, and corn. A few other crops such as canola, strawberries and other table vegetables and fruits are grown in the area, but in much smaller amounts. Livestock consists mainly of beef and dairy cattle, sheep, and poultry.

This season looks particularly risky for crop growers. Prices for potatoes and sugarbeets remain low despite growers' efforts to reduce supplies, and poor water conditions throughout the state as well as the Snake River Basin threaten irrigation water supplies. Some growers are participating in Idaho Power's buyback program. They will raise more dry-farm crops or leave acreage idle this year. That, coupled with a shorter growing season because of a lack of water, may diminish supplies and improve crop prices.

Prospects for the livestock industry are a bit brighter. The outbreak of Hoof and Mouth Disease has diminished beef supplies, driving prices up slightly. But, a lack of adequate irrigation water could reduce the supply of alfalfa and wheat, which could drive the cost of livestock production higher this year.

Overall, the lack of adequate irrigation water, reduced productivity, and an increase in power rates make this a particularly risky year for the agricultural industry.

AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Please note: Information contained in Economic Developments is obtained from area newspapers, local Job Service offices, trade publications, local area Chambers of Commerce publications, and other sources.

Bannock County

- A Pocatello business, Superior Modular Systems (SMS), received a contract to build a \$7.6 million apartment complex. The company expects to hire 25 more employees, bringing total employment at SMS to approximately 65. The local economy will benefit from the additional jobs and because SMS buys most of its materials locally.
- The old elementary school in Downey is being converted into a new assisted living center. The assisted living center is expected to open in May, will employ eight to ten people, and will include a recreation center.
- Construction has begun to build a psychiatric unit at Bannock Regional Medical Center in Pocatello. The \$600,000 unit will be built in the basement of the hospital's geriatric center on Memorial Drive and should be open for patients by mid-September 2001.
- Judy and Lott Hyde opened a new fabric store in the former Odd Fellows building, one of the oldest buildings in downtown Montpelier. The couple plans to renovate the entire historic building, which will house karate and dance classes and facilities for special events. The business is located at 843 Washington.
- The Greater Blackfoot Area Chamber of Commerce moved into its new location at 145 West Idaho Street in Blackfoot. The Chamber, which is currently 235 members strong, held an open house to show off their new facility.
- The Bronco Stop, a convenience store and fast food/deli, opened at 544 E. Walker in Blackfoot. The business employs 6 workers.
- The 185-foot-tall smokestack landmark in Preston, formerly used by Pet Milk Company, was demolished and will be replaced by a new fire/ambulance station. Construction on the new facility should begin this fall.
- Spring Creek Manor, an assisted living center, opened in American Falls. The 8,000 square-foot fa-

cility, located on Hillcrest Avenue, will employ approximately 15 people.

- The Astaris elemental phosphorus plant (formerly FMC), located in Power County, has announced plans to reduce its workforce by 203 jobs. The reductions will occur over the next 14 months. The first wave of layoffs, cutting 91 workers, will occur in June 2001. In September 2001, another 25 workers will be furloughed. The remaining 87 layoffs will occur in June 2002. By July 2002, Astaris' workforce will total 225 workers. Most of the workers at Astaris are from Bannock, Power, and Bingham counties, and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.
- Nearly \$28 million in road construction projects are planned in Southeast Idaho this summer. Mild weather allowed road construction/enhancement projects to start throughout Southeast Idaho. Several major projects are planned for this region and will wrap-up this fall. They include:
- Rehabilitation of concrete surface on Yellowstone Avenue between Cedar Street and Chapel Road in Pocatello.
- Rehabilitation of surface on Pole Line Road between Burnside Avenue and Interstate 86 in Chubbuck.
- Bridge rehabilitation, Interstate 86 Chubbuck Interchange.
- Completion of bridge replacement and additional lanes on the U.S. 30 Portneuf River Bridge at McCammon.
- Asphalt seal coat applied to U.S. 30 between McCammon and the Topaz Bridge.
- Reconstruct and widen U.S. 30 from Simplot to Batische Road, near Pocatello.

Bingham County

- Preparation and reconstruction of Wooton Way between Highland Drive and U.S. 91 in Blackfoot.
- Continued improvements and safety enhancements of Interstate 15 Snake River Bridge, near Blackfoot.
- Widen U.S. 91 at Shelley from Center Street to the north city limits.

Caribou County

- Reconstruct and widen U.S. 30 from Alexander Junction to Soda Springs.

Power County

- Pavement rehabilitation project from I86 Rockland Interchange to Igo.

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